

# Jerome's Heart Went Through a Series of Violent Gymnastics, While Allison Found the Whole Incident So Exciting

# GOLDEN SILENCE

BY  
HENRY C. ROWLAND

TWO of the three important things in life had already happened to Jerome Kenyon. He had been born, and he had just been married. Aside from these vital episodes, nothing noteworthy had occurred until he was leaving the church with his bride. Not many minutes later his bride left him with the passionate declaration that she hoped never to look upon his face again.

This happened in front of the Grand Central station. The quarrel, flaring up like a lighted match tossed on a heap of unconfessed explosives, left Jerome no choice but to withdraw hastily from the danger zone. He was fully convinced that the conflagration would be short-lived and that on his return from checking the luggage he would find his bride amenable to argument. He did not find her as mistaken, for he did not find her at all.

It was not the first of such quarrels. The cause had always been the same. Some would have called it Allison's temperamental nature; others might have called it merely Allison's bad temper.

Like many optimistic lovers, Jerome felt great confidence in the power of the marital state to correct these passionate indulgences. He argued to himself that the conditions of engagement were in themselves most trying to a volatile temperament.

Now, in a singular state of daze, Jerome went back to the baggage room, barely in time to save his luggage and Allison's from being put aboard the train. He sent Allison's effects to her father's house in Gramercy Park and had his own put in a taxi.

Turning the ridiculous situation in his mind, Jerome was astonished to discover a curious sense of relief. There had been too many such quarrels, each abstracting its tribute of tenderness from an emotion which had been cooling through some weeks. Jerome did not know just what the solution might be for such a situation, but he had a vague idea that there was a legal remedy known as an annulment which bore about the same relation to divorce as did a betrothal to a wedding. He stepped into the taxi and told the driver to go to the McAlpin.

As the vehicle became a part of the 8th Avenue procession, Jerome leaned back and tried to compose his nerves. But at this moment he caught sight of a young woman who less than an hour before had offered him subdued congratulations at the church.

It had been a quiet noon wedding, and this young lady was no doubt walking home for luncheon.

"STOP a moment," said Jerome to the driver, and as the taxi drew up to the curb, he stepped out. "Don't faint, Sylvia," said he. "Get in and ride downtown with me."

"But—but—" "But into the taxi," said Jerome. "There has been the most awful mess—"

Sylvia obeyed in a state of trance, then turned and looked at him in dismay. "Oh, dear!" said she. "I did hope you two could manage to get away without a fight."

"We haven't, though," said Jerome. "I suppose that at this moment Allison is on her way to apply for an annulment."

"What happened?" "Listen and be my judge," said Jerome. "As we were about to start away from the church, a messenger boy stepped up to the car and handed me a note. I excused myself to Allison and opened it. There were a few brief lines and a telegram. I glanced at both and shoved them into my pocket."

"Without showing them to Allison?" "Yes."

"She asked to see it?" "No. She demanded to see it. I told her that it was a business communication which I would rather not discuss at the moment."

"What a beautiful start!" murmured Sylvia. "Knowing Allison, I can reconstruct the rest. Did you end by showing her the note?"

"No. If I had, I would not be here at this moment. Moreover, I am not at all sure but what I would have been here in this taxi with you."

"I am thinking you had better let me out," said Sylvia. "An annulment is better than a divorce with alimony and a former sweetheart named as co-respondent. You could not afford the scandal. But first tell me what was in the note."

"Not until you tell me your decision. What would you have done?" Sylvia pondered for a moment. Jerome watched her anxiously. He had once got nearly as far with Sylvia as he had with Allison, but circumstances had interfered. Looking now at her pretty profile and thoughtful gray eyes with their long black lashes, he wondered that he had let them interfere. Poverty and a social position which each felt under obligation to maintain had been the principal factor. Then came the geographical separation of the Atlantic ocean, and then—Allison.

Sylvia took a deep breath. "Well," she answered slowly, "if I'd gone as far as Allison, I'd have seen it through. I'd have carried on if it had been bigamy."

"Why?" "The color flooded her face. "Oh—for a lot of reasons. But I don't think I'd have stopped to weigh them just at that particular moment. What Allison did is rather like playing a roulette bet, then snatching it away after the croupier has said 'Rien ne va plus.'"

Jerome gave a sigh of relief. "Precisely my idea," said he. "Just what did you say?" Sylvia asked.

"I said that I would show her the note and telegram when the proper time came."

"That was the end of everything. She implied that I was holding something back until it would be too late for her to retrieve her mistake. Her final words on reaching the station were that she wished she might never see my face again."

"Sylvia moved uneasily. "Well, Jerry," she said, "now that I've given my decision, show me the note and let me out. Can't you realize what will happen to me if some friend discovers us riding down 8th Avenue together at this particular

moment in a taxi heaped with luggage?" "All right," said Jerome. "I'll show you the note as soon as you answer one more question: 'Will you marry me as soon as Allison gets the marriage annulled?'"

Sylvia crowded back even farther in her corner. "Yes," she murmured. "I never loved anybody but you, Jerry."

Jerome bent toward her. "What if this telegram warns me to leave the country, and quick? What if it tells you that I'm the bigamist you just suggested. Remember that I've been four years abroad."

Sylvia looked at him with dancing eyes and a smile on her red lips. "Well, Jerry, if you've got two already, one more wife won't make the sentence any heavier. Besides, there's luck in odd numbers."

"There's luck in you!" said Jerome, and picked up the speaking tube. "Go to Hoboken," he ordered. The driver nodded. Sylvia looked surprised. "Why Hoboken?" she asked.

"Just to go across the ferry," said Jerome. "I want room to kiss you, and if I don't get it pretty quick, I'll burst."

"You must have been awfully in love with Allison, Jerry."

"Well, I'm not now. Heavens, what a close escape! What a time we would have had! And I've got a hunch it would inevitably have come to this in the end. He took Sylvia's hand and raised it to his lips. Then suddenly his face whitened. "What if she shouldn't annul the marriage?" he exclaimed.

Sylvia gave him a steady look. "Then you'll be the one that would have to carry on, Jerry, and all of this will have to be scrapped with the rest of the might-have-beens."

Jerome's face darkened. He picked up the tube again. "Draw up to the curb," he said.

"You're right, Sylvia. I'll set you down here. But remember, I've your promise."

"I'm not apt to forget it, Jerry; but it doesn't matter. You're not going to escape as easily as that. Allison has had a change of heart by this time, and her father will take a hand."

The taxi slowed and stopped on a side street, where the sidewalk was littered with bales and boxes. Jerome opened the door.

"How about the note?" he asked. Sylvia stepped out, then turned and looked at him with a smile on her quivering lips, and eyes which sparkled through a sudden gush of tears.

"You can show me that the day after we're married—if that day ever comes," said she, whereupon she turned, stumbled over a crate, recovered herself and vanished away.

JEROME hung up the receiver of the telephone and stood for a moment in thought. He was displeased at the nature of the message just received: "Mr. Arnold would like to see Mr. Kenyon at his office between ten and eleven."

Jerome had telephoned his father-in-law that he would be at the McAlpin for the next two days, and the message just received was the answer to this intimation.

An hour later Jerome presented himself at the law offices of Arnold, Thorton & Malby, where, to his further annoyance, he was requested to wait for nearly three-quarters of an hour in the reception room. Then a rather supercilious young person ushered him into Mr. Arnold's private office. The lawyer, a big man with a rather pompous and at this moment aggressive manner, looked up with a frown as Jerome was ushered in. Jerome bowed slightly and stood at attention.

"Well, young man," said Mr. Arnold in a heavy bass, "what is your version of this silly business?"

"I haven't any, sir." "Then what is your excuse?" "I have no excuse, sir."

Mr. Arnold's frown deepened. "Then understand that I am to form my opinion entirely from what my daughter tells me."

"Why not?" asked Jerome. "You surely don't suspect her of not having told the truth?"

"Oh, come, Jerome," said Mr. Arnold, abandoning his magisterial air. "I know, of course, that Allison is quick-tempered and impulsive, but you could scarcely expect any woman not to insist on learning the contents of a message handed to her husband as she was leaving the church just after the ceremony."

"I told her she might see it a little later," Jerome answered. "I said that it was a business matter which I would explain at the proper time. She was not satisfied with this and intimated that it might be something to interfere with our new relations."

"And she insisted on knowing what it was before it became, as she expressed it, 'too late.'"

"In which I think she was quite within her right," said Mr. Arnold. "Very well, sir," Jerome answered. "In the cage there seems nothing more to be said."

The blood surged into the lawyer's face. "There is a great deal more to be said, young man. You persuade my daughter to marry you, which she does not, I may say, entirely with my approval. While your connections may be good, we know actually very little about you beyond the fact that you are said to be an architect of some promise and have a good record. Your earnings are small, while the expectations of my daughter are considerable. Believing the attachment between you to be sincere, I have been willing to waive other considerations. And then just as you are leaving the church, you receive a mysterious communication, the nature of which you refuse to divulge until, to use my daughter's own expression, which I find explicit, 'it may be too late.'"

"Quite so, sir," Jerome answered. "But there is one point which you appear to overlook. Your daughter told me that she hoped never to see my face again."

Mr. Arnold made a gesture of impatience. "An exasperated woman is apt to say anything," he stated, and for the first time during the interview unconsciously scored. "If you had not taken her so literally, she would have returned to you, and you would have gone aboard the train and presently made up the quarrel, and all of the unpleasantness been avoided."

JEROME could not help but feel that there was a good deal of truth in this. He had promised to take



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Allison for better or for worse, then he had the disagreement had left her without the least attempt to smooth the difficulty.

Mr. Arnold saw his hesitation and was quick to take advantage of it. The lawyer was astute, or he would

not have occupied his prominent position at the law offices of Arnold, Thorton & Malby, where, to his further annoyance, he was requested to wait for nearly three-quarters of an hour in the reception room. Then a rather supercilious young person ushered him into Mr. Arnold's private office. The lawyer, a big man with a rather pompous and at this moment aggressive manner, looked up with a frown as Jerome was ushered in. Jerome bowed slightly and stood at attention.

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"THE MRS. SAYS MR. L—R DON'T CARE FOR NO ICE CREAM, CAKE OR CHOCOLATE YAMAS, BUT YOU CAN FETCH HIM IN A BOTTLE OF BEER."

but many other correspondent and many other readers would be interested in a few words regarding the servant problem which must be a subject of general interest as no matter where you go you hear it discussed by men and women of both sexes young and old, married and single. Well friends it looks to me like we

have got this problem solved provided the U. S. don't pass no law barring all Japs from this country as at the present rate which our Japs quit and new ones takes their place, why it is only a matter of 3 or 4 more wks. before all the Japs that was in America when we began hiring Japs will of spent from a hr. to 3 or 4 days in the employ of the undersigned.

But I don't want to frighten nobody off from hiring Japs with the statement that they only make short calls in your home because what is the difference how soon they walk out on you as long as you can fill their place

been in the wrong, and he felt not the slightest doubt that if Jerome had received any news which might have proved detrimental to his newly wedded wife, he would have told her immediately of its character.

"Come, now, my boy," said he, with

nothing neither because the most of them disappear in the night with you still owing them 2 or 3 days' pay besides which nobody should ought to mind a \$1.00 to \$2.00 per month extra when it means that you ain't only getting good service, but also making so many new acquaintances to say nothing about enjoying a life which is just one surprise after another.

Like for inst. one of my children, or kiddies as I am learning to call them, was having a birthday party and I got home from a hard days work with a public just when the refreshments was being served.

Well one of the guests had brought on their mother along with them and the woman of the house was having a quiet dish of ice cream, cake and chocolate in the living rm. waiting on them and I was asked did I want what they was having, so I says no but I would like a bottle of what we jokingly call beer.

I may as well exclaim at this pt. that the Japper of the day was a boy name Yamas which nine out of 10 of them goes by that name which is probably short for Yajamas.

Well any way the Mrs. says Mr. L—r don't care for no ice cream, cake or chocolate Yamas, but you can fetch him in a bottle of beer. Well it couldn't of been more than 2 or 3 minutes elapsed when Yamas come back and served me with a cup of chocolate and a dish of ice cream and cake.

Well the one before that Yamas was a boy name Wm. about who I wrote you before and he held the office of chamber maid besides waiter and the one thing he hated was empty clothes baskets. Whatever you left laying around your rm. when you went to breakfast, why he would throw it for a basket.

Now when I am going to play golf I wear different kind of socks and shirt and can also brag that I have got 2 pair of socks which I wear one pair for golf and the other for the home life.

Which I ain't going to wear that morning, why I generally always leave them somewhere in the rm.

WELL Wm. was with us why I would not no sooner get out of the rm. when he would swoop into the rm. and gather up hosiery and g—rs and shirt, buttons inclusive, and shoot them into the clothes basket till finally I see the quietus on this custom by picking up all the garments I wasn't going to wear and hiding same in various set pieces of antio furniture.

Well one of the Jappers that ain't been to our house is in the employ

a sudden change of tone and manner. "don't you think, young man, that you might have been a little more forbearing?"

Jerome felt his resolution giving way. He had counted on the lawyer's anger, but now suddenly he saw his own position in a different light. The thought of Sylvia sitting him with a frightening pang, it was a pang of renunciation.

He moistened his dry lips. "How does Allison feel about it now, sir?" he asked.

"She regrets it," answered Mr. Arnold. "She has authorized me to say that she is sorry for her hastiness, and would prefer that the whole incident be stricken out."

Jerome's heart sank. "Then am I to understand, sir," he asked in a strained voice, "that she wishes to go ahead as if nothing had occurred to interfere with our plans?"

"Such is her desire," said Mr. Arnold.

"And she does not insist on knowing the contents of the message I received?"

"No. But I think unless there's some particular reason for your not doing so, it would be much better to clear up the cause of the misunderstanding."

"And you don't insist on knowing it yourself?" Jerome demanded, a good deal as if he were slipping into a quicksand might try to extricate himself by shifting his weight to the other foot.

Mr. Arnold observed the pallor which spread over the features of the young man.

"If this message is purely of a business character," said he, "I really think that you owe it to me to be guided by my greater experience. But if it is a personal matter which may have to do with a previous love affair, I am quite content to leave it to your own judgment and sense of honor."

"I told Allison, just as I told you a few moments ago, that it was a business matter," said Jerome wearily. "I find my future prospects to be much altered within the last forty-eight hours. I knew nothing about this until after the wedding ceremony."

Mr. Arnold did some swift thinking. This statement surprised him considerably, because Jerome had told him frankly, on asking Allison's hand in marriage, that aside from a few thousand dollars which he had saved, and a small legacy which he might expect to inherit some day from an uncle, he had nothing to offer but his profession and his small but sufficient earnings as the junior partner in a firm of rising architects. It therefore appeared to Mr. Arnold that either some unfortunate investment must have swept away his savings, or that for some reason he might have forfeited his position with the firm.

But he was now given no time to weigh the problem for Jerome turned to him and asked with a certain grimness:

"Then Allison wishes to consider the incident as closed, sir?"

"Yes," answered the lawyer. "She is waiting to learn the result of my interview with you; so if you feel justified, you have only to call for her your original plans. I can send a clerk to secure the reservations and meet you at the station with the tickets."

"Very well, sir," said Jerome. "No doubt we have both been too hasty. If you will kindly telephone to Allison,

I shall call for her within the hour."

Mr. Arnold, with an appearance of greater relief than he actually felt, offered his hand, which Jerome took in a perfunctory and slightly absent-minded way. "Let us hope," said Mr. Arnold, "that matrimony may permanently remove these temperamental infidelities."

JEROME went out with a heart like lead and returned immediately to the hotel, where his first act was to call up Sylvia.

"Sylvia," said he, unsteadily. "Forgive me, Sylvia. I have just had a talk with Mr. Arnold. Allison retracts her statement of yesterday, and there seems no way out of it."

There was a moment's silence; then a steady voice answered: "I said she would, Jerry. Carry on. God bless you! Good-bye."

Jerry summoned the porter, sent down his luggage, paid his bill, and stepping into a hotel taxi, directed the driver to Mr. Arnold's old city home in Gramercy Park. On entering the house, he was met by Allison, whose face was slightly pale and showed the traces of tears. She offered him her lips.

"We've both been very silly, Jerry," said she. "I was nervous and upset. Let's forget it, dear," said Jerome in a strained voice. "You're all ready?"

"Yes." She touched the bell, and the butler came from the rear of the house. "Put my things in the taxi, Higgs," said Allison.

"They got into the vehicle and were about to move away when a messenger boy crossed the sidewalk to the door of the house."

"Wait a minute," said Allison, and called to the butler: "Is that for me, Higgs?"

"Yes, Miss—I mean, Mrs. Kenyon." Allison took the dispatch, and, leaning back in the cab, tore open the envelope with a word of apology to Jerome. Glancing at her face, he saw it whiten suddenly, while her large eyes darkened from the dilatation of her pupils. Then she looked at him with an indescribable expression, excitement being the predominant note, mingled with an accent of triumph which was almost cruel. Then, to Jerome's astonishment, she beckoned to the butler, who was standing on the steps waiting respectfully but with a bit of curiosity to see them drive away.

"Yes—Mrs. Kenyon." "Take my things back into the house."

The astonished butler obeyed. Allison turned to Jerome, and her thin carmine lips were wreathed in a feline smile. She offered him her hand.

"Good-bye, Jerry," said she. "We've had an awfully close shave from ruining our lives."

Jerome felt his head whirling. "I believe you're right, Allison."

"You don't ask to see my dispatch?" "Why should I, when I refused to show you mine?"

"Well, you might as well know what it says. I'm apt to need your divorce. Collusion doesn't matter."

"You shall see it," said Jerome, "contract by mutual agreement of the parties of the first and second parts. It can be done immediately, and at no great cost."

She handed him the slip of yellow paper. It was dated the morning of the present day from Capetown, South Africa, and it read as follows:

"Just seen old copy of Times announcing your engagement. Implore you to wait my arrival. Leaving by Saturday's ship, Liverpool, and New York. Let's should reach you in a few days, telling of my big strike in newly opened fields. Millions in sight. Wild with anxiety. Cable consulate Capetown that I'm not too late. All my love, Dick."

FOR the seventh time in the last twenty-four hours Jerome's heart went through some violent gymnastics, while his face was subject to that sudden dryness which comes with powerful emotion. But he was getting tired to croak, awkwardly, albeit with sincerity: "My warmest congratulations, Allison. Who is Dick?"

"Richard Randall." "You engaged two years ago, but he hadn't a cent. Then there was a silly fight, and he slammed off in a rage."

Jerome reflected that this appeared to be a habit of Allison's fancies, but it did not seem quite the moment to remark on it.

"Dick was really the one love of my life, Jerry. I've been bitter ever since. You're not too cut up about it, are you?"

"You shall try to weather it," said Jerome dryly. "How long did you say it takes to get an annulment?"

"Oh, father can manage that quickly, with his influence."

"We might go up and break the glad news to your mother. I suggest."

"I'd rather like to have his official acquittal."

Allison laughed. "That's a happy thought. You are a good sport, Jerry."

Jerome told the driver to go to the Metropolitan building. As the taxi moved away, Allison, seized with sudden contrition, laid her hand upon his arm.

"You really are a dear, Jerry. I've been a cat. But honestly, don't you think that this marriage of ours was foredoomed to failure?"

"I'm afraid so, Allison. Even without Dick, I doubt that it would have been a brilliant success."

"Don't blame me, do you Jerry?" "I don't," said Jerome with emphasis. "You have shown a lot more sense than I did."

"But I mean about getting engaged to you in the first place. You see, Jerry, I might as well confess, there were other reasons besides fondness for you. I found out by accident that father was planning to marry again—a woman I can't stand."

Jerry understood suddenly what had puzzled him considerably—until Mr. Arnold's ready acquiescence in his daughter's marriage to a man who, though of good social position, had so little to offer in a material way.

"Do you think me very cold blooded, Jerry?" Allison asked, then added quickly: "No. I'll withdraw that question. You're such an honest old dear, and I want that we should part friends."

"A girl has got to consider her future in these uncertain days," said Jerome oracularly, "especially a girl de luxe like you."

"I'm afraid I am extravagant, my dear," Allison admitted cheerfully, "and as my prospective stepmother

is even worse, I could scarcely have expected much from father."

"Mr. Arnold has some good news in store for him."

"Of course," Allison agreed naively, then laughed. "Oh, dear! I'm so excited I scarcely know what I'm saying. You must think me a horrid mercenary wretch. But now that it's all arranged, do tell me, Jerry, what was in that nasty note?"

Jerome, a bit rattled himself, was about to obey a sudden impulse, but as he glanced at Allison's finely chiselled and beautiful profile, he stammered.

It held an expression that he had seen there many times before, but which now for the first time he was able accurately to interpret. It told of an intense coyness, not alone for money nor for the man, but toward the combination of the two. In fairness to Allison it may be said that money alone had failed to bind her, and Jerome's own case was the nearest in which she had ever come to surrendering herself to the man alone.

HE had evidence enough that as a man, the individual he pleased her, infinitely, but looking at her now, he shuddered to think what must inevitably have happened when this attraction failed to satisfy. So, at her request, he set the note, he shook his head.

"What good could that do you now?" he asked.

"Oh, very well!" she answered irritably. "But if it's what I think, it might help in the annulment of the marriage."

"On the contrary," said Jerome, "it strikes me that my stubborn refusal to show it either to yourself or to your father should count for more in getting you clear of me. Leave the matter alone, my dear girl. If I hadn't refused in the first place, just think what you might have missed!"

Allison nodded. "I fancy you're right, Jerry, but I hope this is going to make a woman-h